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Reporting Pupil Progress in Special Classes for the Mentally Retarded. Special Education Curriculum Development Center: An Inservice Training Program.

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An attempt to improve procedures for reporting the progress of mentally handicapped children in special classes, the guidelines state considerations related to the intent and design of report cards and describe a survey of 188 report cards used in special classes. Four sample report cards are included, which are designed to cover identification information, academic progress, personal and social progress, and subjective information. Parent-teacher conferences are discussed in terms of preparing for and conducting the conference and teacher qualifications for conducting the conference. The purpose, problems, and evaluation of home visitations are considered. (RP)

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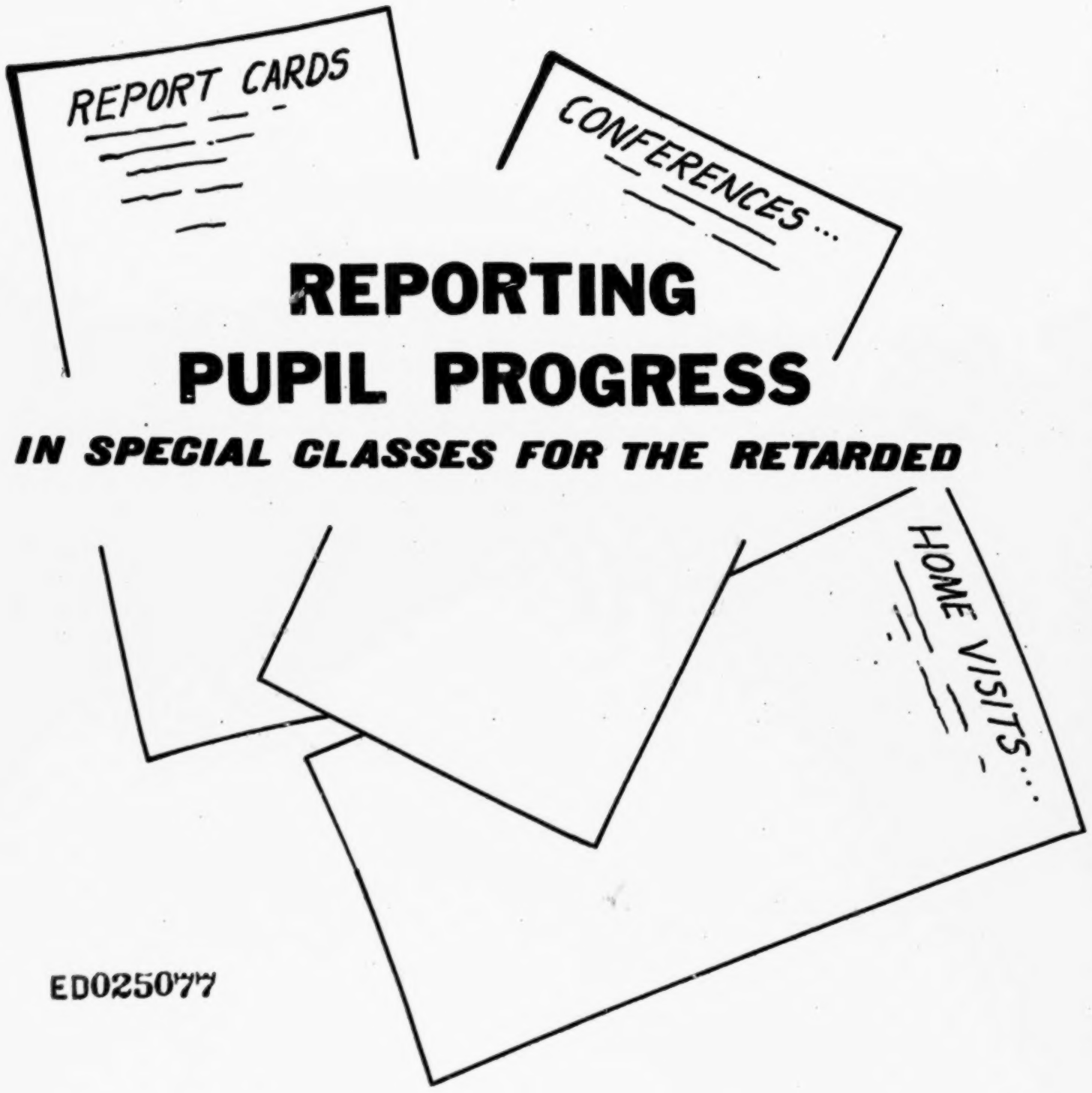

REPORTING PUPIL PROGRESS

IN SPECIAL CLASSES FOR THE RETARDED

ED025077

A Cooperative Program Involving
The Iowa State Department Of Public Instruction
And The University Of Iowa

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SPECIAL EDUCATION CURRICULUM DEVELOPMENT CENTER

An In-service Training Program

REPORTING PUPIL PROGRESS

In Special Classes for the Mentally Retarded

SECDC STAFF

Edward L. Meyen, Ph.D., Director
Sigurd B. Walden, Assistant Director
Munro Shintani, Ph.D., Coordinator
Phyllis Carter, Curriculum Specialist
Keith Doellinger, Media Specialist

ED025077

SUMMER STAFF

F. Corydon Crooks, Staff Assistant
Bill K. Tilley, Staff Assistant
Frank T. Vitro, Staff Assistant
Linda Vande Garde, Staff Assistant

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

Page

Policy Statement. i

Introduction. ii

A Frame of Reference. 1

Report Cards

Introduction 8
Considerations in Developing Report Cards for Use in Special Classes. 10
A Survey of Report Cards Used by Special Classes in Iowa School Districts. 14
An Approach to the Designing of Report Cards for Use in Special Classes. 20

Parent Teacher Conferences

Introduction 33
Preparing for the Conference 34
Conducting the Conference. 37
Teacher Qualifications for Conducting a Good Conference 43

Home Visitation

Introduction 45
Purpose. 46
Problems to be Anticipated 46
Evaluation 50

Summary 53

POLICY STATEMENT

Please Read

The Special Education Curriculum Development Center has as its main objective the operation of a statewide in-service training program for teachers of the mentally retarded. Twenty special class teachers from different geographic areas of Iowa serve as consulting teachers. They attend training sessions at the University of Iowa and then return to their home area to conduct field sessions. All materials prepared for SECDC are intended for dissemination through the field sessions conducted by the consulting teachers. Persons reading SECDC material but not attending the field sessions should keep in mind that the purpose of the material is to serve as a starting point for in-service training and that the publications themselves are not end products.

It should also be noted that any reference to commercially prepared materials by the Special Education Curriculum Development Center does not constitute a recommendation or endorsement for purchase. The consideration of such material is intended solely as a means of assisting teachers and administrators in the evaluation of materials.

Introduction

Numerous special class teachers and directors of special education have requested help in developing procedures for reporting the progress of pupils enrolled in special classes serving the mentally retarded. These guidelines are designed to provide a source of help to school districts wishing to revise or establish reporting procedures. No attempt has been made to offer the reader a prototype system. Rather, the emphasis is on presenting what the SECDC staff considers a meaningful frame of reference for reporting pupil progress, and to offer specific suggestions regarding the use of report cards, parent-teacher conferences, and home visitations.

The focus is primarily on programs for the educable mentally retarded; however, most of the principles and basic suggestions are equally applicable to the establishment of procedures for children enrolled in classes for the trainable mentally retarded.

It should be noted that the minimal reference to the role of evaluation in reporting procedures does not suggest a lack of concern for evaluation techniques. Rather, the evaluation of pupil progress is considered a topic warranting more extensive consideration than could be given in this document. Consequently, this manual pertains only to the mechanical procedures for reporting pupil progress. The direct relationship between evaluating pupil progress and communicating the results to parents is acknowledged. Later publications will deal with approaches to assessing academic and social progress of children enrolled in classes for the mentally retarded.

REPORTING PUPIL PROGRESS

A Frame of Reference

Reporting pupil progress to parents has long been an integral facet of our educational system. Although methods of communicating with parents have varied, the focus continues to be on providing parents with meaningful information about school related growth of their children. Regardless of the reporting techniques employed, the nature of the information conveyed has served as a source of concern for parents and children alike. Presumably the reported information represents an objective appraisal of the child's strengths and weaknesses. However, the parents' emotional involvement often complicates the task of communication. What the teacher regards as a fair and objective appraisal of a child's performance is often misinterpreted by parents. Because of these difficulties school districts have invested heavily in designing report cards, providing time for planned conferences, and strengthening evaluation skills of teachers. In spite of these efforts, the realm of reporting pupil progress remains an area of concern for both teachers and parents.

Placing a child in a class for the mentally retarded does not end the school's responsibility of reporting the pupil's progress to parents. In reality, developing an educational program designed for children with learning problems requires further administrative efforts to insure effective reporting procedures.

The implications of special class placement are many. The contrast between parent perceptions of the special education program and the realities of the curriculum may be considerable. Some parents may view the

placement as the school's attempt to remove the child from the mainstream of the educational program. Others may fear that the class is terminal. Still others will hold expectations that their child will soon catch up and return to a regular class. Parent attitudes towards the special class program will be closely related to the success of school personnel in explaining the purpose of the special class, the functioning level of their child, and the child's subsequent progress. While the dialogue between home and school should not be restricted to information specific to the child's progress, it is realistic to assume that information sought by parents will pertain to the child's school performance. His placement in a special class is a result of difficulties encountered in school.

Traditionally the teacher has assumed the major role in reporting pupil progress to parents. However, the school psychologist, principals, and directors of special education also communicate with parents of children in special classes. The involvement of allied personnel with parents generally relates to decisions on placement, administration of psychological examinations, referrals for needed services, or administrative problems such as transportation. In view of the number of professional personnel having contact with the parents, and also the nature of the information involved, it is important that the teacher understand her role in relation to other personnel who work with parents. Teachers must know to whom parents should be referred when their questions go beyond classroom activities. Too often the teacher is placed in a position of risking her established rapport with a parent when responding to questions of an administrative nature.

Procedures used to report pupil progress should reflect the philosophy and general content of the curriculum implemented in the special class

program. If at the primary level the program emphasizes a practical approach to the teaching of academic skills with a major focus on social development, then the report card or parent conference should convey a similar description. If traditional subject matter areas constitute the areas of performance reported on the card, a parent might logically assume that the curriculum is the same as that of a regular class. It becomes important, then to consider the overall special class curriculum when structuring criteria for reporting pupil progress.

In many districts the task of reporting progress of children enrolled in special classes has been made unnecessarily difficult. In an attempt to minimize the difficulties of applying grading criteria to special classes, administrators have often either eliminated the use of report cards, or employed procedures very different from those used in the regular program. Report cards are not essential, and in most cases the regular procedures are not appropriate to the needs of special classes. The complicating factor, however, relates to the minimal consideration that has been given to developing a frame of reference which contributes to a sound reporting system by the special education staff. Too often the procedures adopted focus on the child's current functioning level without regard to the child's pattern of performance. Reports are also typically geared to the parent who is assumed to have an understanding of the school program. In reality, many parents of retarded children have misconceptions about the school program. A similar situation exists in terms of the teacher's perspective of the child's home environment. If maximum value is to be gained from the reporting procedures, there must be some mutual understanding between the school personnel and the family. Since the school is the setting in which the child is being evaluated, and in view

of the influence of the home environment on school progress, the responsibility for establishing mutual ground for school-home communication falls to the school. This does not mean that the teacher must assume full responsibility. However, he frequently falls heir to this responsibility, particularly in small districts.

The position of this publication is that reporting pupil progress is a vital element in special education programming and warrants the attention of administrators as well as teachers. Students in special classes represent a small percent of the total school enrollment; yet the failure to establish a meaningful method of reporting to parents does contribute to problems which inhibit the development of good programs for the retarded.

Guiding Principles in Developing Reporting Procedures

The following guidelines are not intended to suggest that one particular procedure is more effective than another. Rather, their purpose is to cite those features which are characteristic of a good reporting program.

Public Relations: The public relations impact of pupil reporting is often overlooked. Although emphasis is placed on the child's school performance, the information is directed toward the parent or guardian. The type of information conveyed and the manner in which it is presented will greatly influence the relationship between parents and school personnel. Too often communication between home and school is limited to regular reporting procedures. This information should accurately reflect the curriculum of the special class. This means that particular attention must be given to establishing criteria for reporting and selecting areas for progress reports.

Feedback: Communication between school and home should not consist of the

school simply providing information. Parents can provide additional information which can be valuable to the teacher in planning the child's educational program. Procedures should allow parents to contribute information, as well as to pose additional inquiries. Without such feedback, misinterpretations may go unclarified and small problems may mushroom into major conflicts.

Scheduled Reporting: Reporting should be scheduled at regular intervals, and every attempt made to maintain that schedule. It is also advisable to adhere to the reporting periods used in the regular program; this will avoid crisis reporting. The latter situation occurs when the reporting is geared to immediate problems. When a schedule is maintained, should the reporting coincide with a current problem, it will be coincidental rather than by design. Reporting at regular intervals will also contribute to a more realistic profile of the pupils' performance than would an erratic reporting procedure.

Accumulative Effect: The reporting procedures should contribute to an accumulation of information for school personnel and parents. The parents should be able to relate the information gained from the first reporting period to the information received through subsequent reports. This is particularly important in the case of the mentally retarded and it is also more complicated. This is due to their typically slow progress when measured over short periods of time. The technique employed by the teacher in assessing the child's growth should yield information that shows a profile of the child's progress, reflected in both the information reported to parents and with objective test results collected over a period of time, will be of considerable value to subsequent teachers.

Teacher-Administrator Roles: Because parents of retarded children often seek

information of an administrative nature, responsibility for answering such inquiries should be clearly established. Along with the specification of roles should be the assurance of easy access to persons responsible for administrative decisions. If teachers refer parents to other sources for information, they must do so with confidence that the parents will have access to administrators. Many problems can be alleviated through an effective reporting system. Parental concerns significant enough to stimulate discussion should be given the immediate attention of administrators. Failure to deal with the problem can develop into a situation which may interfere with the child's performance in school. Unresolved problems may also have a spread effect and become an issue of concern to several parents.

Teacher-Home Contact: Direct interaction between the teacher and parents enhances mutual understanding. The most popular approach has been the parent-teacher conference; however, periodic home visitations or informal school visits by parents can bring about the needed contact. Too frequently, parents are required to come to the school for conferences. This practice has some advantages, but also requires the parents to leave the familiar surroundings of their home. Teachers can gain considerable insight into the factors which contribute to the child's learning problems through home visitation. Without an understanding of the child's home environment, teachers will be at a disadvantage in planning appropriate learning experiences.

Peer Influences: The specific procedures for reporting performance of children in special classes should not be dictated by the techniques employed in regular classes. However, the influences of peer pressure should not be ignored. If report cards or parent-teacher conferences are used in the regular

program, there would be considerable merit in using a similar system in the special classes. This does not mean that the criteria or the specific nature of the information reported would be the same. Similar systems, however, will minimize the differences in the two procedures, but still allow the objectives of the reporting programs to be met.

This document is designed to present information relevant to the development of effective procedures for reporting to parents the progress of children enrolled in special classes for the educable mentally retarded. Emphasis will be given to the importance of establishing school-home dialogue and the relationships of evaluation techniques to good teaching. The benefits accrued from a sound program of reporting will influence the quality of the total special class program, as well as enhance the parents' understanding of their child's program and his progress.

The attention given to the use of report cards, parent-teacher conferences, and home visitations is not intended to recommend one in particular, or even a selected combination. Instead, suggestions are offered for use by districts adopting procedures for reporting the performance of special class pupils.

REPORT CARDS

Introduction

The selection and effective use of report cards in special education programs for the mentally retarded is a major concern to educators working in the field. Administrators responsible for evaluation and reporting policies find few established guidelines. Teachers find that the task of evaluating mentally retarded students, assigning grades, reporting their achievement, and filling out report cards a frustrating experience.

In exploring the problem of evaluation and reporting, the sparsity of literature and research in the area becomes evident. Various authors have cited inadequacies in present practices, but few have contributed concrete recommendations or alternatives in design.

A survey conducted throughout Iowa by SECDC found inconsistent reporting practices. By combining this information with current research, a report form was developed to suggest areas in which progress should be reported. This form is designed to serve as a guide to school districts in the development of their own forms and policies. Discussions of both the survey results and the proposed form are found in this section.

Objectives for Evaluation and Progress Reporting

It appears that one of the major difficulties in pupil evaluation stems from a basic confusion about the purpose of report cards. Originally, the report card was often viewed as a method of exhorting pupils to greater efforts through the fear of failure. Although it is generally agreed that grades do effect pupil motivation, justifying their use on these grounds is highly questionable.

Rather than posing a threat, the report card should serve more positive objectives. It should be used by the school as an aid to evaluate a student's performance, and to inform parents of their child's progress. In such reporting, the school's program and objectives are reflected. It is important to remember that report cards should not serve as the sole means of reporting student evaluations to parents. Teacher-parent conferences and home visits should be encouraged to establish maximum effectiveness in communication.

The purpose of evaluation is to assess pupil performance in accordance with both the objectives of the curriculum and each child's own individual capabilities. Effective evaluation should result in influencing the teacher's choice of methods and selection of materials, as well as his general classroom management. The results of evaluation should also serve as a point of reference for reporting to parents, and as a basis for individualizing educational decisions.

Routine evaluation techniques practiced by teachers should contribute to the reporting procedures of the school district. This means that the policies established by the district for their reporting system should be compatible with the informal and structured evaluation techniques implemented in the special class program.

Considerations in Developing Report Cards for Use in Special Classes

The process of designing a report card form applicable to reporting progress of special class pupils is not an easy task. Decisions must be made regarding the areas of the curriculum in which progress will be reported; criteria by which progress will be measured must be agreed upon, and the physical features of the form must be designed. These decisions are dependent on the objectives and policies established by the special education staff. This means that the curricula must be reviewed and the source of evaluation information identified. The formulation of objectives and policies should involve the entire staff, so that the reporting procedures are generally understood by all special class teachers, administrators responsible for the program, and auxiliary personnel.

Considerations Related to the Intent of Report Cards:

1. The report card should provide parents with a clear indication of their child's progress and current functioning level. The emphasis should be on the child's performance in terms of his own capabilities.

2. A realistic description of the school program should be reflected in the contents of the report card. It is important that the emphasis given to such areas as academic skills and social development be compatible with the emphasis given to the same areas in the curriculum. The relative emphasis placed on various areas in the report card, and the implied value given to grades subtly reflect the philosophy of the school program. The parents should be able to infer from the report card a reasonable idea of their child's instructional program.

3. The report should be as objective and accurate as possible. However,

it should not reflect a pessimistic impression. This must be considered in designing the report form, as well as in the teacher's use of it. Because the progress of the mentally retarded child is slow and increments of growth between reporting periods will be small, there is a tendency for report cards used in special classes to convey negative impressions. If the emphasis is primarily on progress, rather than solely on the child's functioning level, this can be avoided.

4. Although the intent of report cards is to communicate with parents about their child's school progress, the report also holds considerable personal importance for the child. Students are quick to recognize differences in report cards. For the retarded child, these differences are too often a source of frustration and despair. Attention should be given to minimizing the differences in the physical features of the report form, without compromising on the information being reported.

Considerations Related to the Design of Report Cards:

1. The general appearance of the report card tends to suggest the value placed on the reporting procedures. The quality of physical properties such as printing, layout, and paper therefore become extremely important. Report cards mimeographed or dittoed on poor quality paper detract from the significance of the information being reported. Too often forms designed specifically for use in special classes are poorly constructed. They should be equal in quality to those cards used in the regular class program.

2. The card should be organized in a logical manner. Information should

include identification data on the child and class, explanation of the grading system, curricular areas in which progress is to be reported, and provision for separate comments by teachers and parents. As the parents read each section of the report they should gain a better perspective of the child's performance. This topic will be discussed in greater detail later in this document.

3. Selecting a marking system has been the most common problem involved in the use of report cards for pupils in special classes. The use of traditional letter grades or grades expressed in percentages pose certain problems when reporting the progress of these pupils. Such grading procedures assume that the class represents a normal distribution of the population; this assumption does not hold true in special classes for the mentally retarded. Parents may misinterpret letter grades by regarding them as equal to grades received by students in regular classes. These grades also tend to direct the attention of pupils, parents, and teachers away from the intended goals of education, and focus instead on symbols representative of qualitative differences in performance. It is important that the marking system be clearly explained.

4. The report card should be sufficiently comprehensive to provide parents with meaningful information about the performance of their child. However, it should not be so long that it becomes a laborious task for the teachers to complete. If there are too many items to complete, it is likely that the evaluation will be somewhat superficial.

5. A well designed report card should be easily understood by all parents.

> The wording should be clear and precise, and the topics used to identify the curriculum areas should be definite and familiar to the readers. Unless parents understand the implications of what is being reported, the objectives of the reporting program are not met. The best way to assess the readability of a card is to test it through limited use with small groups of parents.

Following is a summary of a survey conducted by the SECDC staff. The purpose of the study was to ascertain the current reporting practices employed by Iowa school districts in reporting progress of pupils in special classes for the mentally retarded. The results are presented to illustrate prevailing practices and to cite areas of curriculum presently being reported. The results are not presented as a critique, but rather to serve as a point of departure for discussion in in-service training sessions, and as a reference for districts desiring information on reporting practices in other programs.

A Survey of Report Cards Used by Special Classes in Iowa School Districts

In an attempt to identify current reporting practices in Iowa special classes, SECDC requested sample report cards from local districts. Over 188 report cards presently being used in special classes were received. Each card was examined to determine the criteria employed, and to identify the special features utilized to distinguish the special class report card from those used in regular classes. It was immediately evident that practices varied considerably. There was no consistent format in the design of the cards, nor was there much indication that the cards met the specific needs of special classes serving the mentally retarded.

Only seven of the 188 report cards examined were commercially printed. Another three were data processing forms. The remaining 178 were developed by groups of local teachers in cooperation with their administrators, or were unique to a particular class. This does indicate an attempt by districts to differentiate between the report cards used in special classes from those used in regular classes. In reality, however, this was accomplished in physical appearance, but the content remained very similar to traditional reporting procedures. In general, the physical appearance and quality of construction was poor. The locally prepared cards did not compare favorably in appearance or construction with the commercially printed cards. In terms of content they were similar.

Over half of the report cards failed to identify the education program as different from a regular class. Seventy-four, or thirty-eight percent, carried the label of special education. Only seven specifically identified the educational program as a special class for the educable mentally retarded.

Table I

Analysis of Report Cards

Providing Age Level Information

Terms used to indicate age level	Number of Cards	Percent
Primary	19	10%
Elementary	16	8.5%
Intermediate	9	4.5%
Advanced	6	3%
Work-Study Program	4	2%
Level not indicated at all on report card	134	72%

The data in Table I illustrates the lack of attention given to identifying the age level of the pupil's class. Seventy-two percent did not indicate this factor. This omission may be due to the wide age-range characteristic of many classes which makes it difficult to specify a meaningful level. However, it is important for the parents to know basic information about their child's class if they are to understand the special education program.

The methods employed in reporting performance varied considerably. Use of such terms as "satisfactory" or "unsatisfactory" was reflected in 107 of the report cards examined according to the grading system used. It should be noted that the use of letter grades and numerical scales are very similar,

thus these categories could be combined. The minimal use of letter and numerical grades may be due to an attempt to de-emphasize the academic aspects of the reporting procedures. Descriptive statements are less specific and also less easily compared to performance in a regular class. This accounts for the substitution of this approach by many school districts.

Table II

Analysis of Report Cards

by Grading System

Grading system	Number of Cards using System
Letter Grade (A, B, C, D, etc.)	26
Descriptive check lists	19
Yes-No check lists	3
Grading done by written comments by Teacher	24
Numerical rating scales	22
Use of "Satisfactory" "Unsatisfactory" or similar verbal descriptions	107

The specific academic and social areas in which progress is reported serves to define the curriculum for parents. The results of the survey suggest that the traditional academic areas of reading, arithmetic, and language arts are most frequently used. While this was anticipated, it was somewhat

surprising that more attention was not given to delineating specific skill categories in each of these areas. For the most part, the academic areas were covered by use of global terms, e.g., reading, arithmetic, and language arts. Considerable emphasis was given to reporting progress in social development and work habits. See Table III for a summary of academic and social areas in which progress was reported through the report cards included in the survey.

Table III

Summary of Academic and Social Areas in which Progress was Reported Through the Report Cards Examined

Academic Areas	Number of Cards Evaluating Area	Social Areas	Number of Cards Evaluating Area
Arithmetic	136	Social Development (Attitudes, behavior)	130
Language Arts	100	Work Habits	123
Reading	127	Self Care	58
Writing	115	Speech & expression	30
Music	107	Citizenship	26
Art and Craftwork	100	Courtesy and manners	15
Spelling	95	Cooperation	12
Science	83	Leisure play and game behavior	12
Social studies	79	Evaluation of group work and independent work	10
Health and safety	72	Reports of physical defects where applicable	4
Home Economics and Industrial Arts	26	General physical fitness	26
Blanks provided for individual course entries by Teacher	14		
General comments made by Teacher about over-all skills	24		

Only sixty-five of the report cards included information which helped clarify grading procedures. In general, parents were free to draw their own conclusions regarding the intended meaning of a particular grade. This omission can foster gross misconceptions.

The additional feature characteristics of the report cards examined are tabulated in Table IV. It is interesting to note that fourteen included information on the goals of the special class. One-hundred and ten provided space for teacher comments, but only thirty-six included space for parents to make entries.

Table IV

Additional Features of Report Cards

Characteristic	Number of Reports
Inclusion of Attendance-Tardy Record	142
Provided Area for Teacher Comments	110
Provided Area for Parent Comments	36
Area Provided for parents' request for conference	10
Indicated texts and/or materials and aids used in class	3
Described goals Special Education class	14
Provided records of extra-curricula activities (e.g., field trips)	1

Summary

The study points out that while school districts are attempting to establish appropriate reporting procedures to meet the needs of children in special classes, this goal has been met with only minimal success. The report cards

printed by local districts are generally poorly constructed and fail to provide the parent with sufficient information about his child's performance. The physical defects can easily be improved through an investment in commercial quality production; the selection of criteria, however, will require a greater investment of professional talent. The task of developing a report card system should involve administrators and school psychologists in addition to special class teachers.

An Approach to the Designing of Report Cards for Use in Special Classes

It is impractical to assume that a model report card can be designed for use in all special classes. First of all, programs vary in terms of organization and curriculum. Secondly, the report card should structurally resemble the card used in the regular class. These two factors, coupled with the value of staff participation in developing reporting forms, makes the design of a model report card unnecessary, but the development of guidelines essential.

To aid school districts in developing a reporting form unique to their particular program, suggestions are offered regarding types of information which should be reported. Rather than present a model report card in its entirety, a sample card will be presented in sections. Each section will relate to a single area of the card. For purposes of clarity, the four sections discussed include the following:

1. Identification information
2. Academic progress
3. Personal and social progress
4. Subjective information

This approach to providing guidelines for the development of report cards is taken because the SECDC staff is concerned that the formulating of reporting procedures involve a wide array of local school personnel in addition to the special class teacher--the building principal, director of special education, school psychologist, and regular teachers who work with special class pupils. It is acknowledged that the major contribution will

be made by the special class teacher. However, the views of allied personnel offer perspectives not held by the teacher, and are essential to the design of a sound report card. There is also an advantage to be gained from the interaction among staff members.

As stressed in the introduction to this chapter, the format will be greatly influenced by the design of the report form used in the regular program. This suggestion is made in deference to peer pressures and the conspicuousness of cards contrasting in design. The content will of course vary, but concessions can be made to allow physical resemblance between the special and regular report cards.

Identification Information:

The major decision regarding the identification information on the card relates to the terms used to identify the special class. It is particularly important not to use one term on the card, and then in general reference to the class, to use another term. Hopefully parents know that their child is in a special class. Consequently, reference to the special class should be not to inform them of their child's placement, but rather to offer them a frame of reference as they read the other sections of the report. The identification information should include the following:

1. Name and address of school district
2. Date
3. Designation of program as Special Educator
4. Level of instruction, e.g., primary, intermediate, junior high, etc.
5. Pupil's name and birthday
6. Name of building
7. Teacher and principal's name
8. Child's name

9. Attendance record

Typically the face sheet of a report card contains the identification information. While little difficulty will be encountered in including most items, number 3, relating to the designation of the child's education program, will require considerable thought. The degree to which the program is discussed will be dependent on the status of the special class program. If the district has operated several special classes for a number of years, there may be less need to provide extensive information on the special class. However, if a district sponsors only 1 or 2 classes and the program is new, more information may be needed. The organization of the identification information should be parallel to the report card used in the regular classes.

Three suggested formats are presented to illustrate different approaches to reporting the same information. Sample I is recommended as the most desirable format. It is assumed that the basic features of the regular report card would be used, but the level of the special class would be designated, and a brief statement would be made by the principal.

Sample I is found on the following page.

Sample I

Progress Report

Middletown, Iowa

1968-69

Pupil_____ Birthdate_____

Special Education: Level_____ Building_____

Teacher_____

To parents:

This report is to tell you about the progress your child is making. He has been evaluated in terms of his own ability. The special class program is aimed at providing learning experiences at your child's level. Attention is given to offering, through the special class, a broad program of social and academic skills.

We invite your comments and questions regarding your child's educational progress. Please use the space on page 4 of the card to request a conference or to present comments.

_____
Principal

Attendance Report	1	2	3	4
School Days in Period				
Days Absent				
Times Tardy				

Sample II

Progress Report

Middletown, Iowa

1968-69

Pupil_____ Birthday_____

Special Class_____ Building_____

Teacher_____

To Parents:

Note: Use the same statement included on the report card used in regular classes.

_____

Principal

Attendance Report

	1	2	3	4
School Days in Period				
Days Absent				
Times Tardy				

Sample III

SPECIAL EDUCATION

Progress Report

Middletown, Iowa

1968-69

Pupil_____ Birthdate_____

Special Class - Educable Mentally Retarded: Level_____

Teacher_____ Building_____

To Parent:

This report is to tell you about the progress your child is making. He has been evaluated in terms of his own ability. The special class program is aimed at providing learning experiences at your child's level. Attention is given to offering, through the special class, a broad program of social and academic skills.

We invite your comments and questions regarding your child's educational progress. Please use the space on page 4 of the card to request a conference or to present comments.

_____
Principal

Attendance Report

	1	2	3	4
School Days in Period				
Days Absent				
Times Tardy				

The purpose of the identification information is to clearly designate the child, the school, and the program. While particular attention must be given to identifying the program, it should be noted that the program description should be reflected in every section of the report form. Thus the information on the first page need not be extensive. Conferences and home visits can also be used to build the parents' understanding of the special class program.

Academic Progress:

The important consideration in reporting academic progress is to report information which is easily understood by the parents and which accurately reflects the program. It is easy to report progress in academic subjects by using broad topics as your criteria. For example, use of the term "arithmetic" is relevant, but it does not offer the parent many clues about what skills the child actually possesses. Emphasis must be given to designating specific skills within the area of arithmetic which the child is currently working on. These will vary from special class to special class. It may be possible for large districts operating several classes to identify the specific skills by level, and print them on the cards. In general, however, it will be necessary for the teacher to enter the specific skills. To accomplish this, special class teachers will need to look closely at the skills they are teaching during each reporting period and decide which ones should be cited on the report form. It will then be necessary to measure pupil growth for the specified skills. This initially appears to be a complicated and cumbersome approach; however, if the teacher is in the habit of routinely evaluating the progress of his or her pupils, and if the teacher has some form of curriculum plan, the difficulties will be minimized. If the basic conditions of routine evaluation and a curriculum plan are not

met, however, the teacher will probably be unsuccesful in reporting meaningful information, regardless of the approach taken. Meaningful reporting of pupil progress is closely related to good teaching methods and sound curriculum planning; certainly well planned reporting procedures cannot compensate for an inadequate instructional program.

The academic areas most frequently reported include arithmetic, reading, language arts, social studies, science, health, physical education, and arts and crafts.

Depending on the structure of the curriculum, some categories may be deleted. At least arithmetic, reading, and language arts should be spelled out in some detail. This is not to suggest that 10 or 12 specific skills need to be listed, nor does it imply that the skills change for each reporting period. Rather, skills basic to the instructor's program should be specified. On occasion, additional skills unique to the reporting period will warrant mention, but for the most part, the student's specific skills will remain constant throughout the school year. Presumably, however, the child's performance will vary.

Because of the wide variance in special classes, it would not be realistic to suggest specific skills in all academic areas for a particular level. Instead, a listing of representative skills for the area of arithmetic, reading, and language arts appears in the appendix. Teachers using this approach should use the list simply as a point of departure when determining the specific skills they are most concerned with for their own class. After developing an inventory of skills, the teacher should screen the comprehensive list and select for reporting those skills in each academic area that are most representative of her instructional program. For example, a teacher at the primary level might use the following criteria in the area of arithmetic:

Arithmetic

Specific skills (a) Vocabulary relating to size, weight, time and quantity

(b) Counting

(c) Simple addition

Terms such as "spatial relations," "number awareness," and "concepts" are meaningful to teachers, but are not as easily understood by parents. Therefore, simplified terminology should be used instead.

Following is a sample of a format employing the approach which might be used:

Area of Study	Progress Related to Ability			
ARITHMETIC	1st. Q.	2nd. Q.	3rd. Q.	4th. Q.
(a)				
(b)				
(c)				
READING				
(a)				
(b)				
(c)				
LANGUAGE ARTS				
(a)				
(b)				
(c)				

(Follow the same format in other academic areas)

Once the specific skills have been identified, the question of an appropriate workable system arises. A variety of marking systems are in use, with each having advantages and disadvantages. The system recommended in this document may not work as effectively as others if the approach of specifying skills is not used.

The suggested marking system has three basic features: (1) it calls for the specification of skills; (2) it offers an assessment of the pupil's performance according to both his own ability and to the general performance of the class; and (3) it employs a general criteria for marking purposes.

By reporting the child's progress in terms of two different standards, the parents are given more information on which to build realistic expectations of their child's capabilities. A child ranking low in comparison to the total group may be making satisfactory progress, whereas a pupil high in class standing might be capable of more improvement.

Sample of Dual Grading System

Area of Study	Progress Related to Estimated Ability				Progress Related to Others in Class			
ARITHMETIC	1st.Q.	2nd.Q.	3rd.Q.	4th.Q.	1st.Q.	2nd.Q.	3rd.Q.	4th.Q.
(a)								
(b)								
(c)								

EXPLANATION OF GRADING SYMBOLS

A. Grading on the Basis of Student's Ability
- E - Excellent; over and above expected level of performance
- S - Satisfactory; working at or near ability level
- U - Unsatisfactory; improvement needed

B. Grading in Relation to Others in Class
- H - High in Class standing
- M - Middle or Average Standing
- L - Low Standing in Class

Social Progress:

The area of social progress, while extremely important, is probably the most difficult to appraise. Objective techniques which the teacher can employ in measuring the child's social progress are few; evaluation usually amounts to subjective decisions based on good observation techniques. Fortunately, as they gain experience with their group, good teachers formulate realistic standards of performance. Often the difficulties encountered in assessing social growth result in less emphasis on reporting social progress, and more on academic process. In reality, the opposite may be more characteristic of the instructional program. For this reason, the teacher should devote particular attention to identifying meaningful areas in which progress can be reported. Four general areas are suggested: Work habits, social skills, self-care, and personal growth. Examples of specific items which might be included are contained in the appendix.

Work Habits refers to the pupil's abilities to follow directions and complete assigned tasks, as well as his general attitudes toward academic activities. Social Skills focuses on interpersonal behavior and the child's ability to function in a group of students. Self Care relates to health and safety habits, and personal hygiene. Personal Growth includes the behavior characteristics which reflect emotional stability, healthy attitudes, and general maturity.

The dual marking system suggested in the section on academic progress is also recommended in the area of social progress.

The suggested format for reporting social progress appears on the following page.

Evaluation of Personal and Social Qualities

	Evaluation in Relation to Student's Ability				Evaluation in Comparison to Other Class Members			
Work Habits	1st.Q.	2nd.Q.	3rd.Q.	4th.Q.	1st.Q.	2nd.Q.	3rd.Q.	4th.Q.
(a)								
(b)								
(c)								
Social Skills								
(a)								
(b)								
(c)								
Self Care								
(a)								
(b)								
(c)								
Personal Growth								
(a)								
(b)								
(c)								

Subjective Information:

Narrative comments from the teacher, coupled with regular feedback from the parents, were previously cited as important features of good reporting procedures. Teachers will often find that additional information should be shared with the parents, but that the form does not provide for it. Whatever the reason, sufficient space should be provided for written comments. Frequently the space allotted for comments is too small. One approach would be to use an insert on which comments could be recorded; then the comment sheet would still be a part of the report, and also would contain sufficient space for questions or remarks. A statement encouraging comments should also be included, with provision for parents to indicate if a conference is desired.

Suggested Form

Teacher Comments:
Parent Comments: 1. I would like a conference with the teacher. Yes____No_____. 2. I would like the teacher to phone me. Yes____No_____. 3. Comments:

Parent-Teacher Conferences

Introduction

The popularity of parent-teacher conferences as a method of reporting pupil progress is increasing. This is true in the regular classes as well as in special education programs. In many situations, conferences serve as a supplement to the routine use of report cards. Some school districts have found it to be satisfactory as the primary system for reporting to parents. Suggestions in this document will focus on its merits as a separate reporting system. However, school districts are encouraged to consider a broad approach when developing reporting procedures applicable to special classes for the educable mentally retarded. Districts should capitalize on the strength of all approaches when structuring their reporting program.

It is evident that the parent-teacher conference contributes greatly to effective communication between home and school. The flexibility of the conference allows the teacher to explain the goals of the special class program while focussing on the child's individual achievements and needs. At the same time, the parent has an opportunity to ask specific questions or to provide information which will be helpful to the teacher. While the conference approach does not offer the parents a chance to leisurely review an objective report, it does provide the opportunity for immediate feedback from the teacher, or for parents to pursue evaluation statements which are not clear. Parent-teacher conferences serve a different purpose than home visitations, but many of the positive features of a home visit can be incorporated into the conference. This refers primarily to the informality of the situation and actual involvement of the parents.

The disadvantages are primarily logistic. Conferences are time consuming; teachers must be given release time from classroom duties to conduct them. Arrangements must be made for scheduling the conferences, as well as rescheduling the appointments which are inevitably postponed. Another disadvantage relates to the setting in which the conference is held. Many parents of educable mentally retarded children are not comfortable in the official atmosphere of the school. They are asked to leave their own homes to visit their child's teacher in what they may perceive as a threatening situation.

The advantages of direct contact between parents outweigh the disadvantages. This is particularly true in the case of special classes for the mentally retarded. Typically, a number of school representatives have met with the parents about placing their child in a special class. However, parents often fail to fully understand the advantages of the special class over a regular program. Routinely scheduled parent-teacher conferences offer a means of individually counseling parents on a continuing basis. In essence, this is done under the guise of reporting pupil progress.

Preparing for the Conference

The success of a conference will greatly depend upon the preparation done by the teacher. While the parents' only obligation is to fulfill the appointment, the teacher needs to complete a number of tasks. Most of the planning tasks are an integral part of good teaching practices, so do not require additional work. However, there are some assignments which are specific to the conference. If a conference is not well organized, all parties involved may feel that it was a waste of time. At best, the parents would be reluctant to attend future conferences. Consequently, the planning should be directed at communicating information and establishing a climate conducive to a free

exchange of conversation between teacher and parents.

General Preparation:

(1) The cumulative record should be kept up to date. Much of the information which shows the child's past continuing performance is recorded here.

(2) Dated anecdotal records are equally helpful in preparing for a conference. To be of value, entries must be made over an extended period of time, not just immediately preceding a conference.

(3) Samples of each child's work should be collected. If you are able to show the parent representative samples of their child's work, you are in a better position to explain his functioning level than if you must rely solely on grades. The work samples should also be collected throughout the year.

Specific Preparation:

(1) Since the purpose of the conference is to report pupil progress, specific planning should relate to individual class members. Review the child's academic and social performance and identify particular information which warrants reporting. Look for areas in which the student has demonstrated strengths, as well as those which indicate weaknesses. Be prepared to illustrate with work samples those areas in which the child needs to improve. Should parents inquire about what might be done to assist their child at home, be prepared to offer suggestions.

(2) If the child has been recently reevaluated by the school psychologist, be sure to read the report. This does not suggest

that the teacher volunteer the results; however, parents might pose questions related to the exam. If it is anticipated that the parents will be acutely interested in test results, the school psychologist might be asked to sit in on the conference.

(3) Refer to records of past home visits. You possibly will find information that will help you establish rapport with the parents. It may also help you anticipate their questions.

(4) Write down an informal plan for conducting the conference. List the specific information you want to share with the parents, and formulate some leading questions which you could use to stimulate discussion.

(5) The invitation to parents should be mailed or sent home with the child at least two weeks in advance. A reminder should also be sent home the week of the conference. The invitation should specify the time, length of the conference, room, address, and school phone number. Provision should be made for parents to respond, indicating whether or not they can attend at the specified time.

Conducting the Conference

Adhering to the time schedule is often difficult. The parents may be late in arriving or they may be particularly concerned about a certain aspect of their child's school program, thus they will require more time than was initially allotted. For these reasons, care should be taken to allow a few minutes of free time between conferences. The actual length of the conference will somewhat be determined by the teacher; however, in general a twenty minute conference is sufficient.

Although it is important that most of the provided time be devoted to discussion directly related to the child's school performance, do not rush into the reporting. Three or four minutes initially devoted to casual conversation may well make the difference between a successful conference and a very tense situation.

When the parents arrive at school, the first few minutes should be devoted to making them feel welcome and at ease. The teacher should greet them cordially at the door of the classroom and thank them for coming. If the teacher has made a home visit, he can easily talk about something personal, i.e., "How is your garden doing?" or "Mr. J., I was very impressed with your painting job on the house." Attention can also be drawn to displays of the children's work on a bulletin board. Parents may be given the opportunity to look at these informally for a few minutes before the conference begins.

It is important that the conference be conducted without interruptions so discussion can take place freely in an atmosphere of privacy. The seating arrangement is also very important. Sitting at a table is preferable to the teacher sitting behind his desk and asking parents to sit on small

chairs or students' desks.

Once rapport has been established, the teacher should begin by explaining the purpose of the conference and what is to be accomplished. Positive factors about the child should first be discussed and examples or work from his achievement folder shown. The child's adjustment to the school environment and to other students should be discussed, and specific examples given to illustrate points the teacher is making.

Throughout the parent conference, it is important for the teacher to use specific examples of the child's behavior, his performance, his problems, etc. If the teacher talks only in vague, general terms, the parents may miss the impact of what he is trying to communicate. Illustrating the discussion with specific situations will help give the parents a clearer picture of their child's progress in school. For example, parents may have little understanding of what is meant when the teacher says the child is working at the third grade level in arithmetic, and has grown from 3.5 to 3.8 during the year. It is more appropriate to show samples of the child's work; point out his success in doing addition problems that relate to money, which involves the ability to add two columns of figures that require carrying, etc. The pupil's reading should be reported not by grade level, rather by samples of the material he is able to read and understand. Such reporting should be expressed in behavioral terms.

The child's social growth should also be reported in terms of what he is able to do and the specific progress he has made. Because considerable emphasis is placed on this aspect of the child's development in special education classes, this is an important part of the parent conference. The teacher should discuss the child's ability to get along with others, his

leadership qualities, his ability to face failure, his sense of humor, the acceptance he has of himself and his limitations, and the things in which he shows confidence.

Areas in which the child does particularly well, or needs additional help should be thoroughly covered. If there are suggestions for ways the parents can help at home, the teacher should mention them as he progresses through the conference. In making suggestions to parents, however, the teacher needs to be aware of both the child's environment and the ability of the parents. He should suggest realistic ideas and usable materials. Recommendations about how the parents can reinforce the child's learning at home should be specific.

As the information about the child's performance is reported, the teacher will want to check on the parents' understanding. This can be done by listening closely to their comments and by posing questions. Do not hesitate to ask parents about the behavior of the child at home as it relates to school activities. The teacher may find that Johnny does very well handling money while running errands for his parents, but encounters difficulty in arithmetic at school. This type of information will be helpful in modifying teaching techniques.

It is very important that the teacher not dominate the conference. Certainly she will need to somewhat control the direction of conversation, but this should be done in a non-authoritative manner. Parents should be encouraged to talk; an occasional moment of silence on the teacher's part might encourage participation. Leading questions prepared in advance may be necessary to solicit comments from the parents. Such questions might include:

1. "Has Johnny shown you the way he is able to do these problems?"
2. "Does he ask for help when he can't do some of his spelling words?"

3. "What do you do when he gets angry with himself because he is having trouble with his reading?"
4. "How does he get along with his brothers and sisters at home?"
5. "How does he act with strangers or when he's in a strange situation?"

Some parents may find it threatening to focus directly on the topic of their child's school progress. While this is understandable, avoiding the issue does not contribute to the parents' understanding of their child; nor does it help the teacher obtain information she needs to improve the child's educational program. Teachers should be alert for cues which suggest that the parents are uneasy in discussing their child's performance. Some parents will respond in the following ways:

1. Changing the topic frequently
2. Blaming someone else for the child's problems: another teacher, illness, other members of the family, etc.
3. Dwelling at length on one topic
4. Appearing uninterested in the conference
5. Coming to the conference with a belligerent or negative attitude
6. Constantly asking questions that aren't relevant
7. Appearing to be hurt or overly sensitive; i.e., crying, using a strained voice, shouting, etc.

Necessary Precautions: If the teacher is not careful in conducting the conference, topics may be introduced which will detract from its purpose. In many cases the topics will be real concerns on the part of the teacher or parent, but are still inappropriate for discussion under these circumstances. For example, a parent may be experiencing serious emotional traumas as a result of the child's placement in a special class. The teacher is not trained

to counsel. Any attempt to establish a counseling relationship with the parent may foster additional problems. The teacher should know of appropriate resources available within the school or community, and the procedure for initiating a referral.

Parents vary in their understanding of mental retardation, as they do in their understanding of their child's general functioning level. If they have observed their child's slow rate of development they may have perceived it as something he will outgrow. In other cases, parents may not have been aware of their child's retardation until the school brought his learning difficulties to their attention. Because of this situation parents may pose questions which are beyond the teacher's ability or responsibility. For example:

1. "Is Johnny really retarded?"
2. "What is his I.Q.?"
3. "Will Johnny even return to a regular class?"
4. "Should we think about sending him to a private school?"
5. "Do you think he is brain damaged?"

These questions may be very real to the parents and they do deserve a response. However, they are not the type of questions which can be answered in one or two succinct phrases. In many cases, such questions are symptoms of major problems that the parents are experiencing in adjusting to their child's limitations. The teacher should invite the psychologist and/or director of special education to answer this type of question. Parents should be given honest responses. They should be reassured, but not misled.

Other questions related to parental concern, but more pertinent to classroom performance, will be asked, e.g., "Should we hire a tutor," or "Do you feel we should buy a set of encyclopedias?" This type of question can

be handled by the teacher. An appropriate response to the latter question might be, "In my experience a number of parents have bought sets of encyclopedias for children in special class, but the children really haven't gained too much from them. The information is usually too difficult and not what they need. Some parents have found that it is better to buy other types of books that interest the children, e.g., books on rocks, animals, fiction stories, etc. I am sure that your son would enjoy books which he is able to read. If you are interested I could suggest some topics which seem to be of interest to him."

Administrative topics such as admission policies, transportation problems, testing, and fees should not be handled by the teacher. Certainly he can provide some interpretations, but questions directly related to administrators should be referred to the principal or director of special education. The teacher should avoid engaging in discussions which are emotionally laden and beyond his jurisdiction. His role in the conference is to communicate with the parents regarding their child's school performance. Obviously, questions of a personal and administrative nature relate to the child's school program, but other people are better prepared to assist the parents with these problems. Good rapport between parent and teacher is important and should not be jeopardized by attempts to answer questions not instructional in nature.

Teacher Qualifications for Conducting a Good Conference

The ability of teachers to satisfactorily conduct parent-teacher conferences is often cited by administrators as an area of concern. While the task may be more difficult in the case of parents of the retarded, most teachers will be capable of conducting conferences with few problems. When problems are encountered, they typically relate to insufficient time for preparation. There are, of course, certain personal attributes and professional competencies which enhance a teacher's ability to conduct a good parent-teacher conference:

1. Positive attitudes about pupils, their homes and their parents
2. A comprehensive understanding of the special education program
3. Broad understandings of each child's capabilities and limitations
4. A good knowledge of child development
5. The ability to recognize small improvements
6. A tactful, yet straightforward and honest manner
7. Maturity and emotional stability
8. Ability to listen
9. Ability to express progress or difficulties in understandable language without resorting to pedagogic jargon.
10. Knowledge of his role in relation to the administrative structure of the school system.

Evaluating the Conference

Teachers should evaluate the effectiveness of each parent conference as soon after the conference as possible; notes should not be made in the presence of the parents, yet it is important to write down comments before they are forgotten.

To aid his evaluation, the teacher should refer to the preparetory steps he completed when planning for the conference. He should ask himself, "Did I explain the purpose of the conference well? Did I cover each point I wanted to report? Did the parents feel free to talk?" The teacher should then write down in narrative form a report of the conference. Parents' comments should also be recorded, as well as any decisions that were made for the pupil's future educational program. If any problems were identified during the conference, they should be reported as objectively and factually as possible. The teacher should then make this information available to the proper referral sources.

Date the report of the parent conference and place it in the child's cumulative folder.

The time and effort spent on evaluating parent conferences can be most beneficial. In looking at the conference in retrospect, the teacher may gain additional insight into the pupils and their parents. Also, the teacher should gain personally from the experience of judging his own effectiveness. Most important, the success of reporting information to parents about the school and their child's progress should be scrutinized in order to strengthen, if necessary, this aspect of the reporting system. The evaluation report should be referred to prior to succeeding conferences.

HOME VISITATION

Introduction

The special class teacher must have a broad understanding of his pupil's family situation. Some information may be available in the cumulative folder or through the school social worker, but a first hand observation by a home visit is the best approach. Here the child functions comfortably and finds success in the non-academic environment. Many of the problems that the child faces in school do not exist in the home; at the same time, many experienced at home are absent in the school. The teacher may not be able to see these dynamics without visiting the home. As a result, considerable time and energy are lost by teacher and children alike when the teacher is not familiar with the home background of his pupils.

A significant proportion of children enrolled in classes for the educably mentally retarded are products of disadvantaged neighborhoods. Their families often have minimal financial resources. Some children in special classes, however, will come from middle class homes where economic problems are not a factor. Research has clearly demonstrated the impact of early environmental conditions on the school performance of children. Without first-hand knowledge of the children's home condition and family influences, the teacher lacks a major element of information about the child which is essential to making relevant educational decisions.

In contrast to report cards and parent-teacher conferences, home visitations are not designed as a means of reporting pupil progress. They are supplemental in nature and should be used regardless of the method selected for reporting to parents. The information gained from a home visitation provides the teacher a frame of reference he might not otherwise have. Answers

to why a child does not progress as anticipated, or why a child may lack motivation and enthusiasm, might directly relate to conditions which exist in the home.

Purpose

Home visitation should be informal and social in nature. Because the teacher does not have the same control of the situation that she does in a conference held in the school, the home visitation does not serve as a useful substitute for a parent-teacher conference or report card. While the teacher may hope to meet privately with the parents, most likely the child and siblings will be present, as will be members of the extended family. These conditions would inhibit any attempt to talk specifically about the child's school progress. The purpose of home visitations is primarily to help the teacher better understand her pupils. While the visit is not intended as a critical inspection of the family's living conditions, the insights gained from the experience will be dependent on the teacher's observation skills. He needs to be cognizant of environmental factors which may be contributing to the child's performance in school. This information must be obtained without the impression that the teacher is probing. Although arrangements for the visit were initiated by the teacher, he is a guest in the home and should conduct himself accordingly.

Problems to be Anticipated

Many families of retarded children have experienced disappointments in their personal contacts with school personnel. Too frequently the contact with the home has focussed on problems the child is encountering in school. Often, siblings of an educable retarded child have also experienced learning problems. The family may therefore view the school with suspect. This doesn't mean that they are negative towards education; rather, it implies

that the teacher must keep in mind that the parents may be very cautious toward them in their initial contacts. This attitude of suspicion can easily be overcome if the teacher is genuine in his concern for the welfare of the pupil, and if the family is shown respect during the visitation. The teacher should avoid giving the impression that he is prying into the affairs of the family or that he resents having to make the home visit. It should be remembered that the child spends considerably more time in the environs of the home than in school and that the two settings are probably very different. Certainly the approach to discipline in the home varies from the techniques employed by the teacher. The demands placed on the child at home will also differ from those he encounters at school.

1. Attitude: The teacher should be prepared to accept whatever conditions he observes in the home situation. Through information gained from the cumulative record and from the general attitude and behavior of the student, the teacher should have some preliminary insights into the general nature of the home. He should keep in mind that his purpose is not to change or modify the environment, but to gain a better understanding of the child's home background. It is important that the teacher be open-minded and enter the home with an attitude of acceptance, not judgment:

2. Pupil Frame of Reference: The effort involved in making a home visitation relates the teacher's interest in providing the child with the most appropriate educational program possible. Thus it is important that the teacher have well in mind the child's current functioning level, as well as

his general pattern of performance. Even though the purpose of this visit will not be to report progress, parents will inevitably pose questions pertaining to their child's educational status. The teacher needs to be prepared to handle such questions. Probably the most important area of concern for the teacher will be attempting to relate what he observes during the visitation to the performance of the child in the school. The teacher may want to jot down behavioral characteristics of the child which pose management problems. Home visitations may offer clues to better ways of handling the child in school.

3. Timing: Avoid scheduling home visitations at the end of quarterly reporting periods, or only at times when the child is experiencing major school problems. Try to schedule the home visit during a neutral time when the child's school performance is somewhat typical. Because of the many advantages of arriving when both parents are at home, the visit will probably have to be made in the evening. However, priority should be given to scheduling the conference at a time convenient for the family in general. In order to arrive at the scheduled time, the teacher should confirm the address with a reliable source. In some cases, it may be appropriate for the teacher to accompany the child home from school. She will then be able to observe the reactions of the child.

Things to look for: As previously mentioned, a check list is not necessary. However, there are some sources of information for which teachers should be alert. This will vary, depending on the child and the amount of information previously known about the child's family background. Some suggestions are presented here in a question format:

(a) What is the basic structure of the family unit? In other words, is the family mother, father, or child-centered?

(b) What does the family do as a group for recreation? Do they watch TV, read, participate in outdoor recreation, or is there little evidence to suggest any family recreation?

(c) What type of relationship do the family members tend to have with one another? Are they cooperative, antagonistic, or merely tolerant of each other? Be particularly alert for indications of how the family accepts the special class pupil.

(d) How did the parents initially respond to your visit? Were they relaxed or was the atmosphere somehwat tense? Who took the lead in starting the conversation?

(e) Were any particular concerns expressed by the parents?

What to say: No attempt will be made to offer the teacher a script. Teachers are reminded that the purpose of the visitation is not to report pupil progress. Instead, the purpose is to establish an informal dialog with the child's parents. Try to keep the conversation on non-threatening topics. The visit need not be

long, so don't feel compelled to maintain a lengthy conversation. There may be times when the teacher will have to set the direction of the discussion; however, allow the parents to determine the topics as much as possible. If the teacher does all the talking, little is gained by the teacher.

Evaluation

In evaluating a home visit, the teacher should consider the child as an individual, as a family member, and as a member of the special class. He must analyze the child's actions and reactions in each of these different situations. The teacher then has to make comparisons of what he observed during the home visit with his knowledge of the child's school performance. The results of the evaluation should be a modification of the child's school behavior both academically and socially.

Prior to writing a report on the home visitation the teacher should reflect on questions such as the following:

1. Does the home situation tend to make the child react the way you perceive him in school?
2. In what areas does he need reinforcement?
3. What does he do in school that he doesn't do at home?
4. What does he do at home that he doesn't do at school?
5. What strengths are there in the home that could be used in the school situation?
6. What are some of the weaknesses of the home that should be emphasized at school?
7. What actions will have to be overlooked until readiness is established for changing behavior?
8. Are your expectations of the child too high or too low?

Preparing a Report: After the home visit, the teacher should record his observations. These observations need not be long or detailed, but should be similar in format to an anecdotal record. Comments should not be critical of parents or home conditions, but should be objective observations that will help the teacher make further assessments of the child's abilities and attitudes.

Below are examples of observations that would be appropriate to record. Following each observation are teacher comments on school behavior that might possibly be related to the home situation.

1. Mrs. Smith is very concerned that Johnny do well in school.
2. Mother is very orderly, but tends to restrict the children in free expression or play. (Johnny sits during class discussions; it is very difficult to persuade him to contribute.)
3. Parents are very aggressive, talk in loud voices, and make comments that have no bearing on the conversation. (This is typical behavior for Johnny.)
4. The living room is the hub of all activity--TV, record player, play area, study area, much general confusion. (Johnny causes problems during quiet activities.)
5. They seem to own the latest electrical appliances, but do not clothe their children properly. (Johnny has no concern for other people's property; does not seem to have things of his own.)
6. Mother seems unable to keep all the children clean or the house in any semblance of order. She says it is too much for her. (Johnny has a difficult time keeping his desk in order and doing neat work.)

7. Father appears to be the dominant person in the family; he is very demanding and wants immediate action. (Johnny acts this way on the playground; he becomes very negative and does not respond to attempts at reasoning.)
8. Parents complain of their station in life, that good things do not happen to them. (Johnny does not want to try anything new; he seems defeated before he starts.)

These are a few examples of the types of comments the teacher may make. The teacher should be able to pick up many hints about the numerous problems the child faces in school and at home.

The purpose of preparing a written report is to aid the teacher. The report is for her personal use and does not necessarily need to be made a part of the child's cumulative record. Written comments are subject to misinterpretation; consequently, teachers might be reluctant to record their observations if they are required to enter them in the permanent folder. The teacher's personal record keeping on home visitations will be useful in aiding her own efforts in planning the child's instructional program.

Suggested Report Form

Home Visit Observations

Child's name_____ _____

Parent's name_____

Date of visit_____

Who was present_____

_____

Observations and comments:_____

Summary

Reporting pupil progress is an integral part of educational programming for retarded children. The procedures employed in communicating with parents should not be superficial. Rather, they must be based on effective evaluation measures and be compatible with the curriculum of the special class program. The major prerequisites to good reporting are as follows:

1. A sequential curriculum geared to the specific learning needs of the mentally retarded.
2. An ongoing formal and informal evaluation program.
3. A formulated philosophy of education for the mentally retarded which is generally understood by teachers and administrators.
4. A commitment to objectively report pupil progress to parents.

The purpose of this publication has been to offer direction to school districts interested in structuring reporting procedures for children enrolled in special classes for the mentally retarded. The use of report cards, parent-teacher conferences, and home visitations has been discussed. Some districts will find it necessary to utilize facets of each particular method; others may choose to use one, or a combination approach. Regardless of the method employed, the following conditions should be met:

1. The criteria should reflect the emphasis given in the curricula to the teaching of academic and social skills.
2. The reporting should be precise and easily understood by parents.
3. The procedures should allow for feedback from parents.
4. The information reported should be cumulative in nature. In other

words, it should allow for a review of the child's progress over an extended period of time.

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APPENDICES

APPENDIX 1

EXAMPLES OF SKILLS AND SUB-SKILLS RELATED TO MAJOR ACADEMIC AREAS

The samples of skills are for illustrative purposes. The teacher will want to identify skills representative of the child's program. He should also word the descriptions so as to communicate most effectively with the parents.

I. ARITHMETIC

Vocabulary related to space (up, down, over, under, etc.)

Vocabulary related to size, weight, quantity and time

Counting

Reading and writing numbers

Remembers important numbers (age and birthdate, address and phone number, etc.)

Simple addition

Addition with carrying

Simple subtraction

Subtraction with borrowing

Simple multiplication

Multiplication facts through ten

Simple division

Long division

Understands fractions 1/2, 1/4, 1/3, 3/4

Understands place values of ones, tens, hundreds

Use of measurement facts and skills

1. Linear (inches, feet, yards, miles)
2. Weight (pounds, ounces, tons)
3. Time (tells time, reads calendar, can compute in time units)
4. Temperature (reads thermometer, can express temperature differences)

Money

1. Recognizes coins
2. Recognizes one dollar bill, five dollar bill, ten dollar bill, etc.
3. Counts amounts of money
4. Uses dollar sign ($) and cent sign (¢)
5. Can make change
   a. coins (under $1.00)
   b. coins and currency (over $1.00)

Problem Solving

1. Can understand and do one step word problems
2. Can do two or three step problems involving different mathematical processes

II. READING

Reading Readiness

1. Language skills - self-expression, listening skills, understands and follows directions
2. Interprets pictures

3. Enjoys experiences with books, stories, and printed words
4. Auditory and visual discrimination
5. Starts at the left side of the page

Recognizes words in sight vocabulary lists

Uses context clues, pictures and clues from sentence or phrase

Uses word analysis skills

1. Structural analysis - prefixes and suffixes
2. Phonetic analysis - associate printed letters with correct sound elements, uses sound elements to help figure out new words

Comprehension Skills

1. Associates what is read with personal background of experience
2. Can handle reading selections of increasing complexity and length
3. Can explain story meanings and recall details
4. Makes adjustments in reading according to purpose for reading
5. Can use some basic reference skills

Can read independently - reads assigned readings alone, reads voluntarily during free time

III. LANGUAGE ARTS

Speaking and Listening

1. Adequate self-expression
2. Listening skills
3. Vocabulary appropriate for age
4. Contributes to class discussions and conversations

Writing and Spelling

1. Adequate written expression

   a. can write with a minimum of adult help

   b. writes independently and coherently to meet personal needs

   c. writes legibly

   d. can spell words needed to meet daily writing tasks

IV. SCIENCE

Understands how weather and seasons affect daily activities

Identification of and knowledge about common plants, animals, birds and insects

Understands need for conservation

Knowledge about how man utilizes sun, water and air for his needs

Knows about sources of heat, light, sound and energy.

Understands some relationship of time and space

Uses hand tools and mechanical equipment effectively

Names and locates major parts of body

Understands functions of major body organs

Understands importance of good health and body care

Other

V. SOCIAL STUDIES

Basic awareness and understanding of current events and changes (local, state, national levels)

Awareness of important home and school activities and community functions

Basic understanding of federal, state and local government

Some recognition of famous people and historical events

Familiarity with realistic occupations and major professions

Familiarity with major communication media (TV, radio, newspapers, etc.)

Understands basic geographical concepts and locations

Is able to read and use simple maps, globes, and graphs

Uses leisure time wisely and effectively

Shows respect for law and authority

Understanding of importance of good health and safety practices

Shows awareness of skills, habits and attitudes necessary for successful work experiences

Is able to travel and move about effectively

Has basic information, skills and habits necessary for successful home-making and family living

Is able to use basic reference materials effectively

Other

VI. PHYSICAL EDUCATION

Participates in a variety of games and exercises

Practices good sportsmanship

Mastery of fundamental athletic and game skills (hopping, running, bouncing and catching a ball, etc.)

Can select appropriate games and activities to play

General body usage and motor coordination

Uses and knows community resources that are available for physical activities

Other

VII. ART AND CRAFTWORK

Can use a variety of media effectively

Understands and uses different colors, textures, designs and forms

Displays originality of ideas

General skill in handling art materials

Other

VIII. MUSIC

Responds to and enjoys music

Participates in group singing

Learns lyrics and melodies

Adequate vocal qualities - can carry a simple tune, volume control, etc.

Rhythmic abilities

Other

Other

APPENDIX 2

EXAMPLES OF SKILLS AND BEHAVIORS RELATED TO PERSONAL AND SOCIAL QUALITIES

I. WORK HABITS

Works cooperatively in groups

Accepts responsibilities well

Is dependable

Is thorough

Shows interest and motivation

Retains information from day to day

Attempts new tasks willingly

Accepts criticism and corrects work willingly

Ability to adjust to failure

Uses work time wisely

Uses free time wisely

Promptness and punctuality

Perseverance in a task

Listens well and follows directions

Cares for and replaces work materials

Works independently on own initiative

Is able to concentrate for reasonable length of time

Has positive attitude toward classroom activities

II. SOCIAL SKILLS

Cooperates in a group situation

Eager to engage in group activities

Adequate play behavior

Courtesy and manners

Feeling for others (e.g., offers assistance and shares toys and materials)

Does not disturb others excessively

Respects authority and conforms to school regulations

Respects public and private property

Integrity (honesty)

Leadership qualities

Recognizes and appreciates others contributions

III. SELF-CARE (HEALTH AND SAFETY HABITS)

Adequate grooming habits and cleanliness

Adequate posture

Knows and obeys traffic and safety rules

Takes care of toilet requirements

Appears alert and well-rested

Is aware of hazards

Takes care of personal belongings

IV. PERSONAL GROWTH AND MENTAL HEALTH FACTORS

Maturity

Emotional adjustment

Self-discipline

Good judgment

Accepts criticism well

Recognizes own limitations realistically

Seems happy and relaxed

Ability to tolerate frustration

Self-confidence

Expresses needs adequately

Adequate control of impulsive behavior

Does not sulk or cry over trifles